

**Opponent Testimony for Senate Bill 83
House Committee on Higher Education
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Chair Young, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Miller, and Members of the Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Dr. Raghad Alwattar. As a born and bred Buckeye, and as a healthcare provider and educator at Ohio's largest university, I am here to express my concern over the censorship that SB 83 would enable. The Ohio State University has a long history of supporting freedom of speech and freedom of expression and this support is fundamental to the University's shared values. To suppress diverse ideologies and censor the voices of students, faculty, and staff is to take a giant step backwards from what makes Ohio, and the US at large, a forward and progressive place to live and raise a family.

In the words of Peter Mohler, acting President of the Ohio State University, freedom of speech on campus, even if the views expressed may be highly objectionable and do not necessarily align with the university's values, must be protected to preserve the integrity of higher education and because it is the law of our nation. We are all adults at the university level and it is imperative to learn how to engage in frank dialogue while remaining respectful and civil with those who don't share the same views.

I am also concerned with how this bill would affect student organizations such as the Muslim Student Organization, student chapters of Jewish Voice for Peace, Arab American Association, and many other diverse student groups. Our diversity is what makes Ohio and the United States unique, and to take that away is to stifle the heartbeat that brings beauty to all communities.

Diversity and Inclusion groups like these give students from different backgrounds a sense of belonging and a sense of purpose—many groups work together to run food drives, to volunteer at shelters, to raise funds for natural disaster victims, and to host interfaith events where open dialogue and vital relationships are built. To take these away would be to dismantle the hard work of the visionaries who came before us.

We may not all come from the same background, but as Americans, we hold our right to freedom of speech tight because it is truly what makes this country the best place to live

and thrive in the world. I ask that you please consider my testimony and vote against this dangerous bill.

Thank you,

Dr. Raghad Alwattar